

# From Italian Monuments to the Fallen of World War I to Fascist War Memorials

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## **Abstract**

This paper describes the different ways of commemorating the fallen of World War I in Italy between 1918 and 1940. From the collection of examples emerges that there was no homogeneity in the forms of remembrance during these two decades. Rather, we find both a continuous renewal and overlapping of different kinds of commemorative forms. Right after the end of World War I, a spread of spontaneous local monuments is discernible, though the many small war cemeteries rising near the former battlefield areas were already beginning to be perceived as a problem. Shortly before World War II, the construction of huge ossuaries and, later, war memorials was fostered by the Fascist Regime which availed itself of the fallen for ideological and political purposes. Between these two extremes, also other forms of commemoration such as parks or avenues of remembrance were realized. This paper tries not to force coincidences between history and the history of architecture; nevertheless, it understands monuments, parks and avenues of remembrance, ossuaries, and war memorials as a kind of seismograph sensitive to the period's shifts and jolts, and to Fascist policies in particular.

[1] If there is one thing that characterizes current knowledge regarding different monuments and memorials of World War I in Italy, it is the lack of comprehensive studies and research on the subject. To present date, for instance, there has never been a full census of monuments to the fallen of the Great War, or of commemoration parks or avenues of remembrance; we are therefore not even capable of effectively evaluating the quantitative consistency of such a widespread capillary phenomenon.<sup>1</sup>

[2] Evidently, it is rather difficult to speak of a history's legacy, of whose many occurrences only a portion is known, without the certainty to properly assess its geographic distribution, variations or exceptions. In fact, drawing general

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<sup>1</sup> The number of monuments to the fallen can be estimated between a likely 10,000 to 20,000, and a count of Parks and Avenues of Remembrance should be in the thousands. These are however estimates that are approximate and questionable. A systematic census of monuments and memorials of World War I in Italy, named *Progetto Grande Guerra*, is currently being undertaken by the *Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione* for the first time, but the data collection has not been completed yet.

conclusions from the knowledge of only a few particular cases can be misleading. However, it is necessary to formulate a hypothesis from which to launch future investigations. In the following pages, we therefore propose an overview that holds the dual purpose of setting up a shared platform for a series of future in-depth studies of specific cases on one side, as well as a quantitative type analysis on the other.<sup>2</sup>

[3] What we ultimately intend to outline is a history of architecture, which is intrinsically inseparable from history as such. In cases such as this one, it is impossible to deny or ignore the close ties between the *architecture of memory* and contemporary events of its era. We want to emphasize the need to adopt a more dialectical approach, though: The history of monuments to the fallen, ossuaries and war memorials can work as a kind of seismograph; one which is sensitive to the time's shifts and jolts. But it is also a valuable area of study, equipped with an autonomy that allows us to confirm, refute, correct or enrich our convictions on themes that fall outside of a limited scope.

[4] Alas, we must commence our chronicle from a rather morbid state of affairs. Before the need to commemorate the dead, there was the need to bury them. With the ongoing war, it was other soldiers who took on the task of recovering the bodies of the dead and gathering them in cemeteries that were often located near the front lines.<sup>3</sup> After the war had ended, there was a myriad of small military cemeteries, put together with limited means, mirroring the many battlefield locations.

*Wherever terrain was level or the soil was soft enough to dig, there was a small or large cemetery, usually adjacent to the villages or towns, in the pastures around agrarian huts, or in places where field hospitals were set up. Additionally, beyond these burial places that had signs, tombstones, crosses or at least a marker of some kind, there were also thousands of provisional burial locations for individuals or groups of soldiers, where an assault had taken place, where an artillery barrage of machine gun fire or bombardments had taken lives, or where a medical camp had been set up. Moreover, there were many soldiers who remained unburied, left off of entrenchment roads or away from the town districts.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> In regard to this, also see the website which I developed: *La memoria di pietra*, <http://circe.iuav.it/Venetotra2guerre/01/home.html> (last accessed May 29, 2017).

<sup>3</sup> See Giuseppe Cobòl, "In pellegrinaggio ai cimiteri di guerra", in: *Le vie d'Italia* 28, no. 11 (1922), 1081-1087; Giannino Antona Traversi, "Cimiteri di Guerra", in: *Il Decennale. X anniversario della Vittoria. Anno VII dell'Era Fascista*, Florence 1929, 449-461; Claudio Gattera and Roberto Greselin, *Pasubio 1915-1918. Salvare la memoria. Graffiti della Grande Guerra nei campi di battaglia del Pasubio - Carega - Zugna - Vallarsa - Val Terragnolo - Val Posina - Monte Maio*, Valdagno (Vicenza) 2008; Lisa Bregantin, *Per non morire mai. La percezione della morte in guerra e il culto dei caduti nel primo conflitto mondiale*, Padova 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Mario Rigoni Stern, *Storia di Tönle - L'anno della vittoria*, Torino 1993, 191-192 ("Dove era un luogo pianeggiante o suolo scavabile c'era un cimitero piccolo o grande: a ridosso dei paesi, nelle contrade, nei pascoli delle malghe, o dove erano sorti gli ospedali da campo. Ma

[5] Some corpses, as noted by Mario Rigoni Stern, remained unburied. In July of 1919, the periodical *Risorgimento* claimed that "the remains of corpses and carcasses in decay are to be removed and buried".<sup>5</sup> Therefore, before even thinking of commemorating the dead, the immediate task was to offer them a decent burial. This is the reason the National Commission of Honorary Burial Services for Soldiers of Italy and Allied Countries (*Commissione Nazionale per le Onoranze ai Militari d'Italia e dei Paesi Alleati Morti in Guerra*) was instituted. In January of 1920, the task was then entrusted to the Central Office for the Cure and Honour to the Deceased (*Ufficio Centrale per la Cura e le Onoranze alle Salme dei Caduti*, COSCG), which had the responsibility of tracing and exhuming dispersed corpses, in order to later gather them in provisional cemeteries, pending a "perpetual" or "definitive" burial.<sup>6</sup>

[6] Meanwhile, as soon as the war ended, the whole country was affected by what Enrico Janni called a "monumental invasion" in an article he wrote in a 1918 issue of the periodical *Emporium*.<sup>7</sup> In a short time, a great number of villages, towns and cities in Italy were endowed with monuments to the fallen (Figs. 1 and 2). While the burial of these soldiers was assigned to the army – therefore through a centralized management – the realization of the monuments was left to regional agencies, such as veteran associations, opinion groups and local administrations. On the one hand, there were the burials commanded by executive orders; and on the other, there were the celebratory commemorations, leading to a widespread proliferation of autonomous initiatives.

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oltre a questi che avevano un segno, una lapide, una croce o un cippo, c'erano altre migliaia di sepolture provvisorie di singoli caduti, o di gruppi dove era avvenuto un assalto, dove aveva colpito una raffica di mitragliatrice, dove erano cadute salve di batterie, o dove c'era stato un posto di medicazione. Inoltre fuori dalle strade di arroccamento o lontano dalle contrade, ancora molti erano i soldati che restavano insepolti"). – All translations are mine.

<sup>5</sup> See Mario Rigoni Stern, "La ricostruzione (1919-1921)", in: *Storia dell'Altipiano dei Sette Comuni*, vol. I, Vicenza 1994, 564 ("che si rimuovano e si seppelliscano avanzi di cadaveri e carogne in putredine").

<sup>6</sup> This is how Giovanni Faracovi, director of the COSCG for many years, used to define the cemeteries for soldiers fallen in War World I in his official records: see in particular Giovanni Faracovi, "Memoria sulla sistemazione definitiva delle salme dei militari italiani caduti in guerra", in: *Decreti e disposizioni varie riguardanti il servizio del Commissariato Generale Onoranze Caduti in Guerra*, ed. Ministero della Difesa, Rome 1962, 51-57.

<sup>7</sup> Ettore Janni, "L'invasione monumentale", in: *Emporium* 288 (1918), 283-291.



1 Monument to the Fallen, 1921, Breganze (Province of Vicenza) (photo © Teresa Cos)



2 Monument to the Fallen, 1925, Bigolino (Province of Treviso) (photo © Teresa Cos)

[7] This proliferation was the result of many different needs. For those who were close to the fallen soldiers, it was a question of providing proper commemoration for their deceased; for certain social categories, the call was to highlight their honourable contribution; for local communities, the aim was to pay tribute to those who had given their lives for a common cause. Local government administrations found themselves reconciling different constituents, who often held opposing ideas about the war. All of these different needs and requirements were then intertwined within every single monument. Proof of this is the common format of the different monuments to the fallen, which used a restricted selection of recurring motives with an impressive list of variations, depending on decisions that were negotiated locally.

[8] These numerous initiatives are true indications of the lack of a unitary commemoration. An exception to this was the 1921 ceremony to the Unknown Soldier, which represented a major (but futile) attempt by the nation's political bloc against the emerging Fascist party to appropriate its growing hegemony over the

commemoration of the Great War and its *heroes*. The ceremony consisted in following the journey of the remains of an unknown soldier from the front-lines where he died, all the way to Rome, where he was buried at the Altar of the Fatherland (*Altare della Patria*).<sup>8</sup>

[9] Something began to change with the March on Rome (1922). Fascism had always presented itself as heir to the Great War. Once it came to power, it undertook a series of initiatives aimed at establishing a monopoly on commemorative monuments and memorials to the fallen. The first of these initiatives, enacted just one month after rising to power, was to instate a series of *Parks and Avenues of Remembrance* (*Parchi e Viali della Rimembranza*, Fig. 3). This initiative arranged to plant a tree for every fallen soldier "in every city, in every town, and in every village", and to entrust the care and custody of those trees to the most deserving of school students.<sup>9</sup> In this way, monuments to the fallen in every location would be adjoined with a second monumental testimony, having unitary features (as directed from above) and an educational function.



3 Parco della Rimembranza, ca. 1923, Asiago (Province of Vicenza) (photo © Teresa Cos)

<sup>8</sup> See Augusto Tognasso, *Ignoto militi*, Milan 1922; Otello Cavara, *Il milite ignoto*, Milan 1923; Vito Labita, "Il milite ignoto. Dalle trincee all'Altare della Patria", in: *Gli occhi di Alessandro. Potere sovrano e sacralità del corpo da Alessandro Magno a Ceausescu*, ed. Sergio Bertelli and Cristiano Grottanelli, Florence 1990, 120-153; Enrico Pozzi, "Il Duce e il milite ignoto: dialettica di due corpi politici", in: *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia* 3 (1998), 333-357; Lorenzo Cadeddu, *La leggenda del soldato sconosciuto all'Altare della Patria*, Udine 2001.

<sup>9</sup> See Dario Lupi, *Parchi e viali della Rimembranza*, Florence 1923, 25; Dario Lupi, ed., *La riforma Gentile e la nuova anima della scuola*, Milan and Rome 1924, 221.

[10] In a parallel development, while some monuments to the fallen that were considered subversive (to fascist ideals of war and death for the country) were dismantled,<sup>10</sup> the first mandates of the National Fascist Party were issued. A decisive moment for this was when a debate was triggered by the competition for the *Monument to the Infantryman* (*Monumento al Fante*) on Monte San Michele (1920-1922). Mussolini himself intervened in order to establish that what the monument should communicate – in the words of Margherita Sarfatti – was not a sense of "holocaust or tragic, terrible sacrifice", but one of the "exaltation" of a "victorious nation".<sup>11</sup> The sacrifice of lives was therefore held to be a glorious and honourable event.

[11] The competition for the *Monument to the Infantryman* thus brought to light a political choice of sides. In 1926, returning from a meeting with Mussolini in Rome, the architect Gio Ponti recounted how the dictator "expressed the desire that symbols of Victory overpower those of Mercy".<sup>12</sup> In the year following that encounter, General Andrea Leone Maggiorotti stated: "The Fascist conception of war makes us glorify, not regret, our fallen".<sup>13</sup>

[12] Meanwhile, in 1920, construction work for the first of Italy's ossuaries started on Monte Pasubio. Situated at the top of a mountain that was declared sacred, it consists of a base structure (which houses the remains of the fallen) topped by a tower (Fig. 4).<sup>14</sup> The model adopted here – of Risorgimento origins – would prove inadequate to meet the demands of the regime. What was considered adequate and remained unchanged was instead the location of following ossuaries and war memorials, which were nearly all erected in proximity to or directly on the locations where battles had taken place. This way, they seemed to mark the national boundaries of the country with their presence, like bulwarks, protecting the sacred grounds of the homeland, marking a sort of separation line between *inside* and *outside* that warned outsiders of the national territory's magic circle.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> See Gianni Isola, *Guerra al regno della guerra! Storia della Lega proletaria mutilati invalidi reduci orfani e vedove di guerra (1918-1924)*, Florence 1990.

<sup>11</sup> Margherita Sarfatti, "Il comunicato del Comitato per il Monumento al Fante", in: *Il Popolo d'Italia* (19 January 1922).

<sup>12</sup> See Fulvio Irace, *Giovanni Muzio 1893-1982. Opere*, Milan 1994, 133.

<sup>13</sup> Leone Andrea Maggiorotti, "L'espressione del dolore nella pittura bellica", in: *Esercito e Nazione* 1 (1927), 39 ("La concezione fascista della guerra ci fa glorificare, non rimpiangere i nostri caduti").

<sup>14</sup> See Giuseppe De Mori, *Schio e il baluardo del Pasubio*, Vicenza 1931; Chiara Rigoni, "'Fra severe allegorie ed eloquenti stilizzazioni di alti pensieri': la decorazione di Tito Chini nell'Ossario del Monte Pasubio", in: *La memoria della Prima Guerra Mondiale. Il patrimonio storico tra tutela e valorizzazione*, ed. Anna Maria Spiazzi, Chiara Rigoni and Monica Pregnolato, Vicenza 2008, 363-387; Bruno Tobia, *Una patria per gli Italiani. Spazi, itinerari, monumenti dell'Italia unita (1870-1900)*, Rome and Bari 1991.

<sup>15</sup> See Bruno Tobia, *"Salve o popolo d'eroi". La monumentalità fascista nelle fotografie dell'Istituto Luce*, Rome 2002.





4 Ferruccio Chemello, Ossuary, 1920-1926, Monte Pasubio (Vicentine Alps) (photo © Teresa Cos)

[13] By and large, it was in the *Tre Venezie* – the north-eastern region of Italy – that the battles of World War I were fought; so it was here that soldiers died, and also where they won the war. These were the lands and places that were deemed *sacred*,<sup>16</sup> the ones that were thus to be commemorated with monumental "large concentrations of deceased soldiers",<sup>17</sup> intended to be more like a basis for a new political construction rather than a commemoration of the fallen. It is probably not by chance that the term *Ossario* (Ossuary), which refers to the sullen remains of the fallen (*ossa*, meaning bones), was replaced with *Sacrario* (War Memorial), which effectively renders a pure and simple transfiguration (*sacre*, meaning sacred).

[14] War memorials became the most unequivocal and lasting symbol of the Fascist commemoration of the fallen. The systematic gathering of soldiers killed on the battlefield into "large concentrations of the deceased"<sup>18</sup> (approximately 40 in number) in fact held clear ideological objectives:

*The Fascist Government – observed Gino Peressutti – wants [the glorification of fallen] to be an imposition and a warning; an imposition to those who have tried and will try, even in spirit, to downplay the immense moral value of our sacrifice in the war that we won, and a warning for the following generations over centuries to come.*<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> See Daniele Pisani, "Lo spazio dei sacrari e i sacrari nello spazio", in: *Post 3* (2012), 70-77.

<sup>17</sup> Giovanni Faracovi, "Memoria sulla sistemazione definitiva delle salme dei militari italiani caduti in Guerra", 53.

<sup>18</sup> Giovanni Faracovi, "Memoria sulla sistemazione definitiva delle salme dei militari italiani caduti in Guerra", 53.

<sup>19</sup> Anna Maria Fiore, *La monumentalizzazione dei luoghi teatro della Grande Guerra: i sacrari di Giovanni Greppi e di Giannino Castiglioni (1933-1941)*, Ph.D. thesis, DSA/IUAV, Venice 2001, 158 ("Il Governo Fascista vuole che [la glorificazione di caduti] sia una imposizione ed un ammonimento: imposizione per quanti abbiano cercato e cercheranno anche solo nel loro

[15] Around the mid 1930s, the pace for building and completing the ossuaries increased, with ossuaries such as those of Montello and of Pocol in the form of a tower rising above the ossuary itself (Fig. 5), and with the one in Asiago, where the tower was instead replaced by a triumphal arch (Fig. 6).



5 Giovanni Raimondi, Ossuary, 1932-1935, Pocol (Province of Belluno) (photo © Teresa Cos)



6 Orfeo Rossato, Ossuary, 1932-1938, Asiago (Province of Vicenza) (photo © Teresa Cos)

[16] However, it was not the ossuaries themselves that gave decisive rise to the history of the war memorials as such; it was rather the entry onto the stage of

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animo di sminuire l'immenso valore morale del sacrificio nostro nella guerra che fu nostra, e ammonimento per le generazioni che si seguiranno nei secoli").



General Ugo Cei in 1932. Cei made himself appreciated for his ability to end the long debate regarding the war memorial at Monte Grappa and by appointing Giannino Castiglioni and Giovanni Greppi head designers for all future war memorials that were to be built. The Monte Grappa case opened a new phase in the design and development of the war memorials (Fig. 7).<sup>20</sup> There were to be no enclosed spaces, only open-air pathways. Starting from the underworld, and moving upwards, the ascent past the circles that host the dead is a passage that carries multiple symbolic meanings, as a pilgrimage towards a devotional image of the Virgin Mary, and as a secular tribute to an *altar of the Fatherland*. It is from this elevated point that the Via Eroica footpath begins, flanked by 14 marker stones, each of which is dedicated to a historic battle. This pathway ultimately leads to the Portal of Rome, behind which is a panoramic overlook from where the battle sites can be seen.<sup>21</sup>



7 Giannino Castiglioni and Giovanni Greppi, War Memorial, 1932-1935, Monte Grappa (Venetian Prealps) (photo © Teresa Cos)

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<sup>20</sup> This crucial development of fascist war memorials predates therefore not just the partially comparable development in National Socialist Germany, but also Adolf Hitler's election as Prime Minister (1933). On this, see George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich*, New York 1975; George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers. Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars*, Oxford 1990. See also Daniele Pisani, "'Im Felde unbesiegt'. Il monumento ai caduti nel rito di fondazione nazionalsocialista", in: *Casabella* 714 (2003), 60-65.

<sup>21</sup> See Livio Vanzetto, *Guida storica ai monumenti di Cima Grappa*, Treviso 2001; Marco Mondini, "Le sentinelle della memoria. I monumenti ai caduti e la costruzione della rimembranza nell'Italia nord orientale (1919-1939)", in: *Annali della Fondazione Luigi Einaudi* 40 (2006), 273-293.



8 Giannino Castiglioni and Giovanni Greppi, War Memorial, 1932-1935, Monte Grappa (Venetian Prealps) (photo © Teresa Cos)

[17] There are only two architectural elements that the creators obsessively made use of: the rusticated stone masses and the concrete vaults for the burial recesses. The massive stepped structure sits solemnly along the mountain's inclined slope and redesigns it. Similar to what would later be planned for the Redipuglia War Memorial, the layout of the entombed fallen soldiers – stacked and arranged in a “tight ordered phalanx formation” – is the monument's architecture. If ossuaries were the display cases that held the mortal remains of fallen soldiers, the war memorials were a true amassing of open-air burial recesses (Fig. 8).

[18] Given the impressive results achieved with the War Memorial of Monte Grappa, in 1935 Cei was appointed Commissioner General for the project planning of all war cemeteries in the Kingdom and abroad (*Commissario Generale Straordinario per la sistemazione di tutti i cimiteri di guerra nel Regno e all'estero*). During his tenure, Cei enjoyed great autonomy, having only to respond to Mussolini himself. He was therefore headstrong in his actions and intervened to disavow the decisions of his predecessors. He always re-appointed Greppi and Castiglioni as head designers and proposed variations to the project completed on Monte Grappa, with the construction of artificial landscapes constituted by numerous stacked units that were the burial units of the individual fallen soldiers.

[19] Nothing better demonstrates how war memorials represented one of the most important ritual apparatuses of the Fascist regime than the Memorial of Redipuglia. The hilltop opposite the present-day memorial previously hosted one of Italy's main military cemeteries: the Invitti Cemetery on the Colle Sant'Elia. About 30,000 soldiers were buried there. It was made up of a series of large terraced steps that were carved out of the terrain by mine explosions and arranged concentrically. In the cemetery, conceived by generals,<sup>22</sup> one could still perceive the deaths caused

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<sup>22</sup> Unsurprisingly, the cemetery was not designed by architects or engineers, but by three generals of the Italian army: Giuseppe Paolini, Vincenzo Paladini and Giannino Antona

by the war: The stepped terracing was reminiscent of trenches, and individual burials, made of relics and other remnants of war, rendered a picture of the war in all its rawness. All this was swept away by Cei, who, in 1935, did not opt for a sanctifying preservation of the old cemetery, but for the construction of an entirely new and more monumental war memorial on the neighbouring Monte Sei Busi.<sup>23</sup>

[20] The war memorial at Redipuglia (1935-1938) is a succession of massive terrace-levels perched on a slope, which contain rows of individual burial units;<sup>24</sup> here, however, the individuality of each burial unit is completely lost to the absolute uniformity and vastness of the number of units (Fig. 9). The fallen soldiers – as pronounced by General Baistrocchi – in fact "gave their lives to the patriotic veneration of the living, as if lined up in battle formation".<sup>25</sup> It is therefore here, "where soldiers were once lined up in formation [quotation from the Treccani encyclopaedia, lemma "cemetery" ], that the fallen soldiers are now deployed".<sup>26</sup>



9 Giannino Castiglioni and Giovanni Greppi, War Memorial, 1935-1938, Redipuglia (Province of Gorizia) (photo © Teresa Cos)

Traversi.

<sup>23</sup> Benito Mussolini openly detested the Invitti Cemetery on the Colle Sant'Elia: in one occasion he called it "a vast heap of old metal" ("un grande deposito di un ferro vecchio"), thus suggesting that the regime should have made a clean sweep of a work that he considered temporary and not martial or monumental enough.

<sup>24</sup> The identified fallen soldiers were buried in the structure's large steps, while those that were not identified (more than 60,000) were instead located in a pair of common graves located at the sides of the votive chapel. On Redipuglia, see Patrizia Dogliani, "Redipuglia", in: *I luoghi della memoria. Simboli e miti dell'Italia unita*, ed. Mario Isnenghi, Rome and Bari 1996, 375-389; *Parametro* 213 (1996); Fabio Todero, *Redipuglia. Il sacrario, la guerra, la comunità*, Mariano del Friuli (Gorizia) 1993.

<sup>25</sup> Bruno Tobia, "Dal milite ignoto al nazionalismo monumentale fascista (1919-1940)", in: *Storia d'Italia. Annali 18: Guerra e pace*, ed. Walter Barberis, Torino 2002, 606-607.

<sup>26</sup> Michele La Torre, "Cimitero", in: *Enciclopedia Italiana di Scienze, Lettere e Arti. Appendice I*, Rome 1938, 413-416.

[21] The process of depersonalising the fallen reaches its maximum expression at Redipuglia, where over 100,000 soldiers are buried at the same war memorial. Not surprisingly, the structure also includes an open space for mass assemblies: The space for the dead is clearly conceived as a place for the living. So, what was supposed to be an end, that is the glorification of the dead, here becomes the means.<sup>27</sup> This is also attested by the brazenness with which the fallen soldiers were considered; in accordance with the treatment reserved for *martyrs* of the fascist army, the endless repetition of the word *PRESENTE* („present“) was inscribed on the places of burial.<sup>28</sup> This custom did not belong to any military tradition, but, as part of the fascist liturgy for roll-call, the use of that inscription in fact turned all of the fallen soldiers into fascists *ante litteram*.<sup>29</sup>

[22] The idea of the masses of dead that World War I had imposed hence found its full expression at the war memorial of Redipuglia. Already in 1922, Augusto Tognassi had stated that the dead "asked to be united in one embrace of love".<sup>30</sup> The stockpiling of burial units in war memorials was the perfect expression of a mass death that claimed not individual victims of war, but masses of unknown soldiers. Such a policy aimed at managing and handling massive numbers, such as the ones of the masses of dead commemorated in war memorials. Along with this process, what is also significant is the progressive disappearance of the use of sculpture. War memorials were conceived to commemorate the gregarious who were devoted to sacrifice; hence the preference for an emotional involvement of the viewer in a sacred space, rather than the presentation of messages written in the codes of millenary iconographies.

[23] It is likely that another very interesting phenomenon presents itself for this very same reason: the extraction and use of stone from the places where the battles were fought and where thousands were killed, for the construction of monuments to the fallen as well as ossuaries and war memorials. In sacrificing themselves for the homeland, the soldiers baptized the land with their blood and

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<sup>27</sup> See Mario Isnenghi, *L'Italia in piazza. I luoghi della vita pubblica dal 1848 ai nostri giorni*, Milan 1994.

<sup>28</sup> On the use of the word "PRESENT" in the Fascist "liturgy", or "cult", see Emilio Gentile, *Il culto del Littorio. La sacralizzazione della politica nell'Italia fascista*, Rome and Bari 1993, 48.

<sup>29</sup> This process had in fact already begun in the times of Parks and Avenues of Remembrance, to the extent that they commemorated both the fallen soldiers of the Great War, as well as the so-called "martyrs" of the Fascist "revolution". Through its development, the Memorial to the Martyrs (Sacrario dei Martiri) in the Exhibition of the Fascist Revolution, which opened in Rome in 1932, naturally held a key function; see Partito Nazionale Fascista, *Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista. I° decennale della Marcia su Roma*, ed. Dino Alfieri and Luigi Freddi, Bergamo 1933; Jeffrey T. Schnapp, *Anno X. La Mostra della Rivoluzione Fascista del 1932*, Pisa 2003. In addition to the war memorial of Redipuglia, the recurrence of the word "Presente" is also found at the Pian de Salesei war memorial, also a work by Greppi and Castiglioni, built at the same time as the one in Redipuglia.

<sup>30</sup> Tognasso, *Ignoto militi*, 72.

made it holy. After the war, the same stone extracted from those nationally renowned mountains, steeped in the blood of the fallen, was to be used as construction material. This became a means for paying tribute to those places and to those who died there; on the other hand, it was also an attempt at obviating an inability to express the magnitude of the sacrifice and the resulting victory through the use of an outdated iconography. In other words, the use of blocks of stone taken, for instance, from Monte Grappa or Monte Pasubio for monuments located throughout the country set forth an obvious form of aphasia by reintroducing a procedure that evokes the cult of relics.<sup>31</sup>

[24] When the Redipuglia War Memorial was inaugurated in September of 1938, Mussolini was travelling through the Tre Venezie area of Italy to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the country's victory.<sup>32</sup> In a Europe that was being torn by the winds of war, Mussolini stated:

*If there is drama, we will face it. And if tomorrow our people are called to other tests, we will not hesitate a single minute. You are the same. You have the same spirit now as you did then. You are ready to obey as you did then. You are ready to believe as you did then. And, above all, you are ready to fight like you did then.*<sup>33</sup>

[25] The country was beginning to mobilize. With a final, symbolic roll-call to the fallen soldiers, now piled up in enormous war memorials, a monumental cycle was completed and closed; meanwhile another, of a very different kind, was opening. There were many signs that announced this. For example, one can refer to pages in the *Dizionario di politica (Dictionary of Politics)* published between 1939 and 1940, where the achievements of World War I were amply celebrated. The focus however soon shifted to the relationships between Fascism and war in general, more than between the Great War and Fascism. This is attested for example by the definition of the term *fascism* by Antonino Pagliaro (who in turn quoted the *Dottrina Fascista (Fascist Doctrine)* by Benito Mussolini):

*Fascism does not believe in the possibility nor the utility of perpetual peace. It therefore rejects pacifism, which hides a renunciation of struggle and a cowardice*

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<sup>31</sup> See Daniele Pisani, "'Il primo e il più grande monumento della vittoria'. Nota su di un caso di iconologia aniconica", in: *Engramma* 113 (2014), 31-54, [http://www.engramma.it/eOS2/index.php?id\\_articolo=1507](http://www.engramma.it/eOS2/index.php?id_articolo=1507) (accessed April 28, 2017).

<sup>32</sup> See *Le Tre Venezie* 10 (1938); Paolo Nicoloso, "Settembre 1938: Mussolini nella Venezia Giulia. Indirizzi totalitari e architetture per il fascismo", in: *Torviscosa: esemplarità di un progetto*, ed. Enrico Biasin, Raffaella Canci, and Stefano Perulli, Udine 2003, 13-26; Vittorio Dal Piaz, "La Mostra della Vittoria a Padova del 1938 progettata da Gio Ponti", in: *La memoria della Prima Guerra Mondiale. Il patrimonio storico tra tutela e valorizzazione*, ed. Anna Maria Spiazzi, Chiara Rigoni and Monica Pregnolato, Vicenza 2008, 308-323.

<sup>33</sup> Benito Mussolini, *Opera omnia*, ed. Edoardo and Duilio Susmel, vol. 29, Florence 1959, 164 ("Se dramma ci fosse, noi lo affronteremo. E se domani questo popolo fosse chiamato ad altre prove non esiterebbe un minuto solo. Voi siete gli stessi, voi avete lo stesso spirito di allora, voi siete pronti ad ubbidire come allora, voi siete pronti a credere come allora, e soprattutto a combattere come allora").



*when faced with sacrifice. Only war brings all human energies to a maximum and provides a stamp of nobility to the people who have the power and virtue to deal with it.*<sup>34</sup>

[26] Through this rhetoric of war, there is a clearly manipulative utilization of World War I. The historic task of Fascism had not yet been realized, as the fallen soldiers had sacrificed themselves for – as stated by Carlo Curcio in his definition of the term *fallen* –

*a much larger revolution, that is not yet completed and that will pave the road for all of Europe toward a new order of civilization and justice; one that will characterize the twentieth century as the century of Fascism.*<sup>35</sup>

[27] The war, in short, was to become Fascism's horizon. The celebration and commemoration of the fallen soldiers was an invitation to war. Paradoxically, it was also with that same war that all commemoration of World War I and its fallen soldiers came to be stripped of its meaning, as becomes evident in a telegram sent in 1940 by the Ministry of the Interior to all Prefectures, stating a request to "replace all bronze monuments with marble ones".<sup>36</sup> The initiative resounded: to dismantle many monuments to the fallen, and melt the lead of which a large part of them was made in order to produce new weaponry. This was surely an emblematic turning point; and with the outbreak of World War II, the fallen soldiers of the present and of the future were soon to join those of the past.

### **Guest Editors of Special Issue**

Christian Fuhrmeister and Kai Kappel, eds., *War Graves, War Cemeteries, and Memorial Shrines as a Building Task, 1914-1989. Die Bauaufgabe Soldatenfriedhof/Kriegsgräberstätte zwischen 1914 und 1989*, in: *RIHA Journal* 0150-0176

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<sup>34</sup> Antonino Pagliaro, "Fascismo", in: *Dizionario di politica*, vol. 2, Rome 1939-1940, 131-133 ("Il Fascismo non crede alla possibilità né all'utilità della pace perpetua. Respinge quindi il pacifismo che nasconde una rinuncia alla lotta e una viltà di fronte al sacrificio. Solo la guerra porta al massimo di tensione tutte le energie umane e imprime un sigillo di nobiltà ai popoli che hanno la virtù di affrontarla").

<sup>35</sup> Carlo Curcio, "Caduti", in: *Dizionario di politica*, vol. 1, Rome 1939-1940, 363 ("una più grande rivoluzione che non è compiuta e che dovrà spianare l'Europa ad un nuovo ordine di civiltà e di giustizia, che caratterizzerà il secolo XX come il secolo del Fascismo").

<sup>36</sup> This was the order contained in a telegram sent by the Ministry of the Interior to all the Prefectures on February 25, 1940; it is entirely quoted in Paola Barbera, "I monumenti ai caduti in Sicilia: tra Risorgimento, Grande guerra e fascismo", in: *L'architettura della memoria in Italia. Cimiteri, monumenti e città. 1750-1939*, ed. Maria Giuffré, Fabio Mangone, Sergio Pace, and Ornella Selvafolta, Milan 2007, 337.

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